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TAGS: [IR](#) [IZ](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#) [XF](#)
SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY DISCUSSES BSP WITH LOCAL IRAQI
LEADERS

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[¶1.](#) (C) The Ambassador hosted Deputy Secretary Negroponte, Special Advisor to the Secretary on Iraq Satterfield and four Baghdad community leaders for dinner at his residence June [¶12.](#) Primary topics of discussion were the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP), elections, and what would happen if U.S. forces withdrew from Iraq within a few months. The Iraqi attendees said that there are still serious problems with security and services in spite of the BSP. The Iraqi attendees said that security has improved somewhat in east Baghdad (Rusafa), but that security has not improved in west Baghdad (Karkh). They added that services are worse than before the BSP, noting that hours of electricity provided by the state grid are at an all time low and that Baghdad is experiencing water shortages for the first time since the fall of the previous regime.

Ambassador Asks if Security Has Improved with BSP

[¶2.](#) (C) The Ambassador hosted Deputy Secretary Negroponte, Special Advisor to the Secretary on Iraq Satterfield and four Baghdad community leaders for dinner at his residence June [¶12.](#) The Iraqi attendees were Dr. Kamel Shabibi, the chairman of the Baghdad Provincial Council's economic committee; Shatha Al-Obeidi, the Baghdad governor's public relations advisor and member of the Karkh district council; Dr. Haidar Zaydan, a member of the Sadr City district council; and Haidar Mohammad Abbas, the Baghdad governor's chief of staff. The Ambassador asked his Iraqi guests about the concerns of average Iraqis; three of the guests said their primary concern is security, while one said services.

[¶3.](#) (C) The Ambassador asked his Iraqi guests if they think security and services in Baghdad have improved since the beginning of the BSP. The guests replied that security has improved somewhat in Rusafa (east Baghdad), but has not improved in Karkh (west Baghdad). Zaydan, a Shia, said he feels safe in his own neighborhood of Sadr city, but added that he does not feel safe traveling to predominantly Sunni areas of nearby Adhamiya and some other parts of Baghdad. He also said that it might not be safe for others to visit Sadr City. Comment: Zaydan left the dinner early to avoid driving back to Sadr City after dark for security reasons. End comment.

[¶4.](#) (C) Al-Obeidi said the security situation along Haifa Street has improved. The Ambassador replied that improvements in security on Haifa Street are among the success stories of the BSP. Al-Obeidi added that it will be difficult to improve services without improving security.

[¶5.](#) (C) Abbas said that the sectarian cleansing of

predominantly Shia areas of Baghdad appears to have contributed to calm in those areas because sectarian tension is eliminated. He added that the displacement of Shia from predominantly Sunni areas of west Baghdad has not produced stability, because Sunni "terrorists" have turned on the Sunni community and average citizens are striking back. He said an example is the recent intra-Sunni violence in Ameriya, where last week some Sunni groups launched several days of attacks on Al-Qaeda in Iraq elements. Abbas, a Shia, said that he was displaced from his home in the predominantly Sunni Adel district and that he would probably be killed if he went back even for a visit.

¶6. (C) Abbas added that one of Iraq's key problems is that neighboring countries do not want Iraq to be prosperous and democratic, because citizens of neighboring countries would more aggressively demand change from their own governments.

Iraqi Guests Say Services Not Improving -----

¶7. (C) Shabibi said there has been some improvement in services since the beginning of the BSP, but the other three Iraqi guests disagreed. Al-Obeidi said that the number of hours of electricity from the national grid is at an all time low and that Baghdad is experiencing water shortages for the first time since the fall of the previous regime. Abbas said fuel shortages have become so severe that he does not bother to try to buy gas for his car at fuel stations, but rather buys from the black market even though he cannot afford to pay the elevated prices. The Deputy Secretary said he thought he had heard that fuel lines were getting shorter, and the Ambassador joked that people are staying home because they know there is no gas. Al-Obeidi, Abbas and Zaydan said

BAGHDAD 00001995 002 OF 002

lines at fuel stations are often several kilometers long and that buyers must arrive early in the morning if they hope to buy fuel before it runs out.

Iraqi Guests Oppose Closed Lists for Coming Elections -----

¶8. (C) When asked about coming elections, Iraqi guests said they oppose the use of closed party lists like those used in previous elections. Satterfield said the U.N. had favored the use of such lists for administrative reasons and that now it would be difficult to get the Council of Representatives (CoR) to change the system because legislators are members of the very parties that would lose influence if changes were made. Al-Obeidi said the closed lists allowed unknown people to take office. Zaydan said if the same system is used in the next poll he will not bother to vote.

Ambassador Asks About Hypothetical Withdrawal of U.S. Forces -----

¶9. (C) The Ambassador asked the Iraqi guests what they believe would happen if the U.S. would withdraw troops from Baghdad in two or three months. He stressed that the U.S. is not planning to do so, but that he wanted to discuss such a withdrawal hypothetically. The Iraqis all agreed that a U.S. withdrawal from Baghdad would lead to a serious deterioration in Baghdad's security. Al-Obeidi and Abbas said Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) are not prepared to take over security responsibility for the city. Shabibi said ISF are incapable of maintaining law and order. Abbas said the security situation started to deteriorate when the coalition started handing over security responsibilities to ISF, so a withdrawal would probably make security conditions even worse.

¶10. (C) Al-Obeidi said that bringing officers from the former army would help professionalize Iraq's security forces. She said that the Government of Iraq has asked former soldiers to return to service but that the government was not serious in its invitation. She said that she does not see a security

threat in inviting former soldiers back because criminals and insurgents would not return to service.

¶11. (U) This message has been cleared by the Deputy Secretary's staff.

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